Part One

THE NATIONS THAT LIVED AMONG THE HILLS

> *You know, in our language, the Black Hills are called Paha Sapa or H'e Sapa, which means,'the hills appear to be black.' They are also known among the old ones as O'onakezin, which means 'a place to take shelter.' Another name by which they are sometimes called is Wamakaognaka E'cante, which means 'the heart of everything that is.' The area surrounding the Black Hills is called Cha'Gliska…This means 'sacred hoop.' So you have a center and a sacred hoop encircling it…There are many places within the Black Hills that have special significance, such as the hot springs. Years ago our medicine men would meet there and share stories and medicines. They would sit within the warmth of Mother Earth. Now the place is an amusement park…There is another place called the Red Lodge Canyon, where our picture-writings are on the walls. These writings have been vandalized. An awful toll has been taken on them. Within these rock writings are the Seven Commandments of the Indian religion. These coincide with the seven rites of the Lakotas. We still go there to fast, to vision quest, to gather sage or herbs, we always have to get permission!* (Kenny Good Eagle in Little Eagle, L. 2000: 212-213).

The eastern most outlier range of the Rocky Mountains, which straddles the border of Wyoming and South Dakota, was called by many tribal nations in the region with a name that translates into English as "Black Hills." The Shoshones, who along with their Comanche relatives had early connections to the Black Hills, knew them as *E'n gakwe'hen garnda'yaBi,* which translates as "Red-fir(?)-its place, its-mountain range" (Shimkin 1947:250). The Poncas, who resided for a time on the southeastern edge of the Hills in the mid-eighteenth century, called them *Pahe'cabe* [Black Hills] (Howard 1965a:7), the same name given to them by their close relatives, the Omahas (Fletcher and LaFlesche 1972:1:102). The Arikaras, who often traveled to the Hills to hunt and trade in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, named them *waakatítkAt* [Black Hills] (Morsette in Parks 1991:2:499, 507). The Kiowas, who lived and traveled in the region during the last half of the eighteenth century, knew them as *Ts'ooukhou k'oup* [Black Rock Mountains] (Harrington 1939:168) or *Sa'dalkani k'op*,[1] which refers to the tripe from a buffalo cow (Mooney 1979:419). By the dawn of the nineteenth century, the Black Hills were located at the center of Cheyenne territory. Besides their common names, *Moxtavhohona*, literally translated "Black Hills" and *Witapahit* "Island Hills," the Cheyennes also addressed them by two esoteric appellations, *Hohonecedonil* [the People who Live among the Hills] and *Kamicubsdinsia* [the People who Move Camp among their Mountains]. These two names designate not only the Hills but also the Cheyennes themselves, and they are used only in ceremonial settings (Petter 1913-16:582; Moore, J. 1981:14). By the end of the 1830s, the Black Hills were at the heart of the Lakota's territorial range. The Lakotas also knew them as *Paha Sapa* [Black Hills], *He Sapa* [Black Ridge], or *Witapaha* [Island Hill]. Euphemistically, they called them their "meat pack," *Oiyhpeye Talo* or spoke of them as a "gathering place," *O Onakinsin* (Hassrick 1964:75,165; Kadlececk and Kadlececk 1981:81; Black Elk, N. in DeMallie

[1] Harrington, however, argues that this name actually refers to the Badlands and not the Black Hills (1939:168).

1983:163-164,171-172; DeMallie 1984:314; Black Elk, C. 1986a:205-206). In sacred settings, they variously addressed them as *Wamaka Og'naka I' Cante* [The Heart of Everything that is], *Hocoka yapi* [The Center], and *Otiwita* [The Sanctuary] (Black Elk, C. 1986a:205-206). Most of the common tribal names for the Black Hills are either descriptive of the landscape or particular activities associated with the area, while the sacred names convey something more essential and fundamental about a peoples' relationship to the region: they suggest an intimacy born out of a deep knowledge and experience of the Hills, one created by peoples who had lived there and been nourished by their presence.

Although Europeans and later European Americans knew about the Black Hills early on, they remained off the proverbial "beaten path" of most outsiders until the mid-nineteenth century. When European Americans first arrived in the northern plains, they heard many stories about a mountainous region that tribal peoples called the "Black Hills," *Costa Negra* in Spanish or *Les Cotes Noires* in French (Chittenden 1935:2:727). When the Lewis and Clark Expedition explored the valley of the Missouri River, William Clark (in Moulton 1983-87:4:204) wrote about them as follows on May 26, 1805:

> The high Country in which we are at present and have been passing for Some days I take to be a continuation of what the Indians as well as the French Engages call the Black hills. This tract of Country So Called Consists of a Collection of high broken and irregular hills and Short Chains of Mountains, sometimes 100 miles in width and again becoming much narrower, but always much higher than the country on either Side; they commence about the head of the Kanzas river and to the west of that river near the Arkansaw river, from whence they take their Course a little to the west of N. W. approaching the Rocky Mountains obliquely passing the river Platt near the forks, and intercepting the River Rochejhone near the big bend of that river, and passing the Missouri at this place--, and probably Continueing to Swell the Country as far North as the Saskashawan river. tho' they are lower here than they are described to the South and may therefore terminate before they reach the Saskashawan. The Black hills in their course northerly appear to approach more nearly the Rocky Mountains.

Like many other writers of the time, Clark applied the name, "Black Hills," to a wide range of elevated locations east of the main front of the Rocky Mountains. Indeed, Hiram Chittenden (1935:2:728) notes that in fur-trade times many of the "detached spurs and peaks" west of the Missouri River were collectively known as the "Black Hills." Even as late as 1849, Francis Parkman used this label loosely not only to identify the Black Hills proper but the Laramie Range as well. A decade later, Henry A. Boller (1972:225) was still applying the term to bluffs along the Knife River in North Dakota, even though by this date most writers distinguished the Black Hills proper from other high elevation locations west of the Missouri River.

The history of the area, known today as the Black Hills, is a complex one. Prehistorically, it is marked by the traces of many culturally diverse peoples, and, historically, it is identified with the presence of more than ten different tribal nations. Besides the Cheyennes and Lakotas, the historic nations who regularly lived and/or traveled in this region include the Arapahos, Arikaras (Pawnees), Comanches (Shoshones and Utes), Crows, Hidatsas, Kiowas, Mandans, Plains Apaches (Padouca and Kiowa), and Poncas. Atsinas, Blackfeet, and even Flatheads who lived in Montana were reported to occasionally trade with tribes who stayed around the Black Hills. Tribes maintained diverse relationships to the Hills for varying lengths of time and at different points in history, and their affiliations were much influenced by the region's distinct environment.

One of the striking features of the Black Hills is the diversity of their landscapes and life forms. This feature, which is reiterated again and again throughout the report, played a significant

role in influencing not only how American Indian peoples adapted themselves to the area, but also how they thought about it in cosmological terms. Over the past two centuries, the Hills have been home to over one thousand distinct floral species and hundreds of different fauna. A number of species, representing all points of the compass, reach their geographic limits and intermingle in the fastness of the Hills. Tribal nations came to the Hills from all directions as well and brought with them distinct cultural legacies born in settings as different as the woodlands lifestyles of the Northeast, the desert traditions of the Southwest, the agricultural complexes of the Southeast, and the intermontane cultures of the Northwest. Indeed, as will be elaborated upon in later sections of the report, Native peoples understood the Black Hills as a great crossroads, the "gathering" or "meeting" place of many different human and animal nations.

The complexity of the region's human habitation, which in historic times involved more than ten different tribal nations, three European and American states, as well as various communities of mixed American Indian and European, Asian, African, and Hispanic ancestry, covers an enormous body of historical and ethnographic material. It is not a simple task to reconstruct a general picture of the region's history without doing some disservice to the rich detail of its inhabitants' lives and experiences. The following reconstruction, therefore, represents only an overview of major population settlements and movements in and around the Black Hills along with some interpretive discussion of the forces behind them.